



**A Message  
From  
The  
Secretary**

Kansas is taking action to become a healthier state. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius has launched an initiative called Healthy Kansas which involves a comprehensive effort to reduce the cost of health care by addressing structural inefficiencies, to improve insurance coverage for Kansans and to contain the rising increases in cost in a manner that will involve KDHE in an extensive educational/prevention effort. The KDHE led effort will

be targeting children in schools, adults in the workplace, and aging seniors in their social environment. The Healthy Kansas initiative will be funded by an assessment on tobacco products.

The KDHE portion of the health initiative, *Taking Steps Together*, will focus on reducing tobacco use, increasing physical activity, and better nutrition to reduce obesity. KDHE along with the Kansas State Department of Education, through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will continue to work with 77 schools and others that express interest, to collect BMI (body mass index) data from students voluntarily. This data will help the state to better assess the prevalence of overweight children in Kansas. In addition, a Child Health Advisory Committee, and School Nutrition and Physical Activities Committees will be formed to determine the best approaches and program initiatives for improving the health of our children.

KDHE will also formalize a workplace wellness program and encourage businesses across the state to take part. This will involve pilot programs with toolkits and Web site support and also technical assistance to other state agencies for program implementation efforts. Throughout this process, community leaders will also be recognized for their efforts in wellness efforts and implementation of wellness programs.

The final portion of the *Taking Steps Together* initiative will involve working with the Kansas Department on Aging on local wellness programs for seniors, expanding Senior Farmer's Markets, encouraging community gardens, and working with the Medicaid population to reduce tobacco use. The Healthy Kansas initiative will involve reactivating the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness as well as fitness awards for youth, community awards, and workplace wellness awards.

This aggressive initiative to improve our state's overall health by reducing tobacco use and improving physical activity and nutrition can help each of us to live longer, healthier lives with less illness and fewer complications as we age. The key is each of us "taking steps together" to improve our health, and as a result, our lives.

Our KDHE team is already taking steps to improve the lives of other Kansans through a generous donation of \$15,104 to the United Way. Thank you to everyone who made it possible for our agency to reach its \$15,000 goal this year, and a special thanks to the Division of Health whose special fundraiser (a book and pizza sale) put us over the top with a collection of \$1,018.11! In addition, a special thanks to an individual from Division of Environment (who wishes to remain anonymous) who stepped forward and increased his donation in the final days of the campaign helping us reach our goal! Congratulations KDHE and thanks to everyone who participated in the special events and donations!

We are quickly approaching the Christmas holiday and many of you will be taking vacations and traveling. Have a safe and happy holiday and thank you for all the work you did to make 2004 a great year!

Be Well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Kathleen Sebelius", written in a cursive, flowing style.